



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST HISTORY

HSFT-8162.FA21

3.0 Units

Starr King School for the Ministry ~ Graduate Theological Union

Fall 2021

Instructor Information

The Rev. Dr. Meg Richardson

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Availability: Please email to set up a meeting in person or by phone or Zoom.

Meeting Dates and Times

Fall Semester Online and Asynchronous

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course begins with a discussion of recent historical developments in Unitarian Universalism and then extends back through time to the various antecedents of Unitarianism and Universalism in pre-Reformation Europe, all the way back to the early church and the Council of Nicaea. Students will have the opportunity to explore Unitarian Universalist heritage, as well as different historical approaches. We will examine social location in relation to class, race, and gender identities, and how these enabled or impeded social justice advances. We will discover the origins of our faith by progressing from our known contemporary experience to the unknown, and perhaps unknowable. Along the way we will consider various theological developments within this tradition, as expressed through various identities and the challenges presented by new modalities of faith including Transcendentalism and Humanism. Sources will range from primary sources to anecdote, with an emphasis on articulating contemporary experience in the context of historical identity and experience.

In accordance with Starr King School for the Ministry's pedagogy, students will enter our learning community in a spirit of cultural humility and personal authenticity. Our personal lived experiences and academic sources will inform our investigation of Unitarian Universalist history. Evaluation is based on demonstrated preparation, weekly posts on the Moodle, and a final paper or project, and projects must be approved in advance. Students who take the course for a grade, instead of Pass/Fail, are required to submit a 25-page paper with original research.

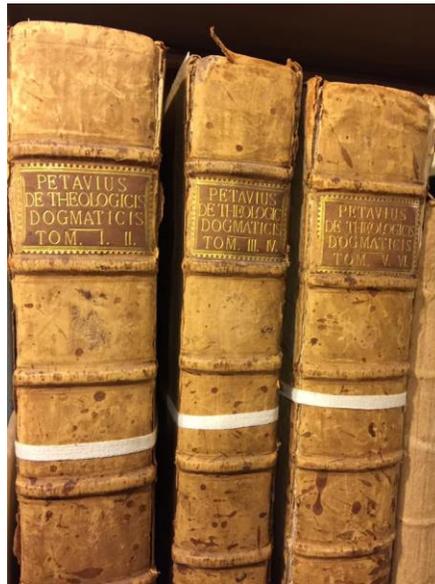
Students, who are degree candidates at Starr King, may wish to consider writing a paper that may be submitted for consideration for the Earl Morse Wilbur Endowed Scholarship Fund. This was established by the Rev. Dr. Jay Atkinson, and named in honor of the trailblazing historical work of Earl Morse Wilbur. Wilbur was the first President of our seminary, and this fund will provide a scholarship to a student with a "robust interest in UU History, with strong preference given to applicants with an academic focus on the history of the Polish Brethren.

This course relates to the Unitarian Universalist Association's Ministerial Fellowship competencies 6 and 7, and the Starr King Thresholds 4 and 6.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

During this course, students will be able to

- Develop an understanding of the entire arc of history from modern Unitarian Universalism to its antecedents in the Radical Reformation and the Nicæan Council.
- Achieve familiarity with central events and figures in Unitarian Universalist History
- Work with primary and secondary sources to understand historical disciplines.
- Develop critical tools to evaluate Unitarian Universalist history.



LEARNING OUTCOMES

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to

- Articulate various movements that contributed to the development of Unitarian Universalism
- Achieve familiarity with Unitarian Universalism's major events and figures.
- Use various sources and frameworks to investigate historical issues in Unitarian Universalism.

COURSE POLICIES

Students are expected to complete all required reading and post on the Moodle weekly, both as original posters and in reply.

The following syllabus information is required by the Graduate Theological Union, the Association of Theological Seminaries and the Department of Education:

- Academic Conduct <https://www.sksm.edu/current-students/statement-academic-integritymisconduct/>
- Plagiarism <https://www.sksm.edu/plagiarism/>
- Notice to Students About Your Privacy (FERPA) <https://www.sksm.edu/academics/policy-statements/ferpa-familyeducational-rights-and-privacy-act/>
- Disability Policy <https://www.sksm.edu/resources/student-handbook/starr-kingpolicies/students-with-disabilities-policy/> If you require accommodations for a disability or special needs, please email the instructor directly at mrichardson@sksm.edu to arrange this.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

REQUIREMENTS FOR ONLINE WORK:

Introduction Essay

For this assignment, students will write a personal essay as a brief introduction, with the following prompts:

What is your history with Unitarian Universalism? Is there a place that is significant to your faith journey, and why? Name an individual who has been an important influence for your spiritual development, and how?

In addition, students should briefly discuss their backgrounds, their professional goals and how they would expect to use what they learn in this class. Students should post introductions in the introduction forum on Moodle. This essay should be brief and is due by **Wednesday, the first week of class.**

Readings, Discussion, Help:

There is required reading for each week, click on “Readings” in the Unit Summary.

There will be two opportunities to discuss the readings with the class each week. One will be the “Question for Unit X” “forum” which will invite you to respond to a discussion question relating to the unit content. There you will see and respond to other people’s responses in an asynchronous forum, so you can comment at your convenience and the discussion will accumulate throughout the week. In general, the discussion in the “Question for Unit X” forum will be among the students.

This year there is an alternative assignment to answering the weekly Question. Students may take a person or event covered in that unit’s reading and type it into the GTU library’s “Summon” [search bar](#). Find some interesting supplemental information in an article and analyze it for the forum briefly. For example, if you type “Unitarian Universalist merger,” one result is “Some UUs Are More U than U: Theological Self-Descriptors Chosen by Unitarian Universalists.”

The second “forum” is “Help with Reading.” Post here any questions of clarification or expansion you have regarding the materials you have been studying. This is also the place to



post problematic links, please give the location of the link on our class Moodle so that they can be fixed quickly. The instructor will reply to each question, and students are also encouraged to reply, as they are able.

The requirement for online participation is that you make something that averages out to at least one posting for each unit, but these postings may include a response to the discussion question, a response to someone else's discussion, a question posed in the Help forum, or a response to someone's question in the Help forum. This is our opportunity to engage in a dynamic, collaborative approach to history.

To make sure you are getting what you need out of the readings, check out each unit's "Learning Outcomes for Readings." You can self-test your comprehension of the reading, and, if you need any additional help, post your question or dilemma to the Help Forum. In addition, I would like to encourage students to meet as partners or in small groups, for discussion of the readings, by Zoom, Skype or over the phone.

LIVE CHAT:

There will be a maximum of four live chats on Zoom scheduled during the semester. Participation will not be a requirement, given potential conflicts. If the chat is recorded it will be placed in VoiceThread on the class Moodle.

FINAL PAPER OR PROJECT:

There will be one final paper, or project, **due the final day of class.**

Please email the instructor to discuss topics and ideas for the paper or project as you begin thinking about it.

If you are taking this course for a GRADE instead of the recommended Pass/Fail option, you are required to submit a 25-page research essay which draws on primary sources and is organized around a clear thesis.

If you are taking the class Pass/Fail, you have three choices:

You may submit a 25-page research essay

OR a 10-15 page reflection paper discussing how historical events in Unitarian Universalist history affect present day controversies in this movement, or your vision for your religious leadership and how it is informed by Unitarian Universalist history and historical figures

OR a final project, to be approved IN ADVANCE. An example of a successful final project is a card game designed to be used with teenagers to teach them UU History.

Your paper should be double spaced lines of text, and conform to the Research and Citation guidelines presented on the Purdue OWL website: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

GRADING

This course is offered Pass/Fail in accordance with Starr King's counteroppressive pedagogy. If a student requires a letter grade for any reason, please contact the Registrar at Registrar@SKSM.edu and cc mrichardson@SKSM.edu before the beginning of the course.

Students will be graded 30% on demonstrated preparation, 40% on class participation on the Moodle, and 30% on the final paper or project.

REQUIRED TEXTS

As much as possible, readings will correspond with the Required Reading List of the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee. All of the required texts are from the Ministerial Fellowship Committee's list.

Please read books with * IN ADVANCE. Books to acquire and read:

*Mark Harris, *Elite: Uncovering Classism in Unitarian Universalist History* (2010) ISBN-10: 1558965734 \$6.72 (Kindle Book)

Charles Howe, *For Faith and Freedom: A Short History of Unitarianism in Europe* (1997) ISBN-10: 1558963596 \$16.00

Dan McKanan, ed. *A Documentary History of Unitarian Universalism Volume One: From the Beginning to 1899* (2017) ISBN: 9781558967892 \$20.00

*Dan McKanan, ed. *A Documentary History of Unitarian Universalism Volume Two: From 1900 to the Present* (2017) ISBN: 9781558967915 \$20.00 Read all introductory materials and skim the readings. This is to give students a head start on the first month of readings.

*David Robinson, *The Unitarians and the Universalists* (1985) ISBN-10: 0313209464 from \$33.98

Ross, Warren, *The Premise and the Promise* (2001) ISBN: 9781558964181 \$9.99 (Kindle edition)

Additional readings, videos and supplemental articles will be provided by the professor on the class Moodle.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Unit 1: Contemporary Issues

Unit 2: Race and Civil Rights

Unit 3: Unitarian Universalist Consolidation

Unit 4: Rise of Humanism

Unit 5: Universalism

Unit 6: The American Civil War and Abolition

Unit 7: Transcendentalism

Unit 8: The Classical Period of Unitarianism



Unit 9: Unitarianism in the United Kingdom

Unit 10: Unitarianism Emerges in North America

Unit 11: Unitarianism in Transylvania

Unit 12: Polish Brethren and Socinianism

Unit 13: The Early Church, the Reformation and the Radical Reformation